

# Labour Market

NOTES ■ April 2013

## Alberta posts job decline in March

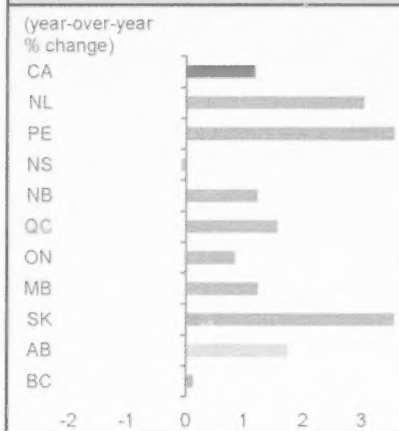
### Alberta

- Employment drops, following two months of gains. Alberta lost 11,300 jobs in March, after adding 13,900 positions in the previous two months. This was the largest monthly loss in over three years. March's decline was largely due to a loss in private jobs (-14,300) and part-time positions (-7,600). Despite the monthly decline, year-to-date employment is up 2.0%. Alberta has gained 36,800 jobs since March 2012, representing a 1.7% increase.
- Accommodation and food services industry posts largest loss. The job losses in March were concentrated in certain industries. Within the service sector, accommodation and food services (-11,600) saw the sharpest drop, followed by finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (-6,200). In the goods sector, the utilities and construction industries each lost 4,600 jobs.
- Unemployment rate moves up, still second lowest in country. Alberta's unemployment rate increased to 4.8% in March from 4.5% in the previous month. Alberta's unemployment rate remains well below the national average of 7.2%.
- Weekly earnings dip in January. Average weekly earnings edged down 0.4% to \$1,090 in January, but was still up 3.6% on a year-over-year basis.

### Canada

- Canadian employment sees largest decline in over four years. Canada shed 54,500 positions in March, erasing February's gain of 50,700. Ontario (-17,400), Quebec (-16,800), British Columbia (-14,800) and Alberta (-11,300) were largely responsible for the job losses. Only four provinces added jobs in March. Canada has gained 203,300 jobs (1.2%) since March 2012 most of which are full-time positions.
- Unemployment rate increases. The Canadian unemployment rate rose 0.2 percentage points to 7.2% in March, its highest reading since November.
- Weekly earnings rise. Canadian average weekly earnings increased 0.1% to \$908 in January, representing a 2.7% gain over January 2012.

### Employment Growth by Province, March 2013 vs. March 2012



Source: Statistics Canada

### Alberta Labour Market Indicators

Indicator	March or Latest*
Employment	2,167,900
month-over-month change	-11,300
year-over-year % change	1.7%
Alberta Unemployment Rate (UR)	4.8%
Edmonton UR**	4.4%
Calgary UR**	5.1%
Participation Rate	72.6%
Average Weekly Earnings (AWE)	\$1,090.33
year-over-year % change	3.6%
Average Hourly Wage	\$27.87
year-over-year % change	7.1%
Job Vacancy Rate**	2.6%

Source: Statistics Canada

\* All data is from the Labour Force Survey for March except AWE, which is from the January Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH), and the job vacancy rate which is from the December SEPH.

\*\* This indicator is calculated as a three-month moving average.

For definitions of the data indicators discussed in this publication, please see the second page of August's [Labour Market Notes](#)

# Alberta's Employment Growth: A Regional Perspective

Alberta has had the strongest employment growth among the provinces over the last decade, adding an average of 47,300 jobs per year over this period. In seven of the last ten years the province had the highest job growth, and in six of the last ten years the province had the lowest unemployment rate. This Labour InSight examines what regions in Alberta have led these impressive gains.

## Major cities and Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake region lead job gains

All regions in Alberta posted positive job growth over the last ten years, although most of the growth in the province was driven by three regions (see chart 1). The Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake economic region has recorded the highest job growth over the last ten years, growing at an average annual rate of 3.4%. This region includes Fort McMurray and the vast majority of oil sands operations. The Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake area has benefited from strong investment activity created by the oil sands industry.

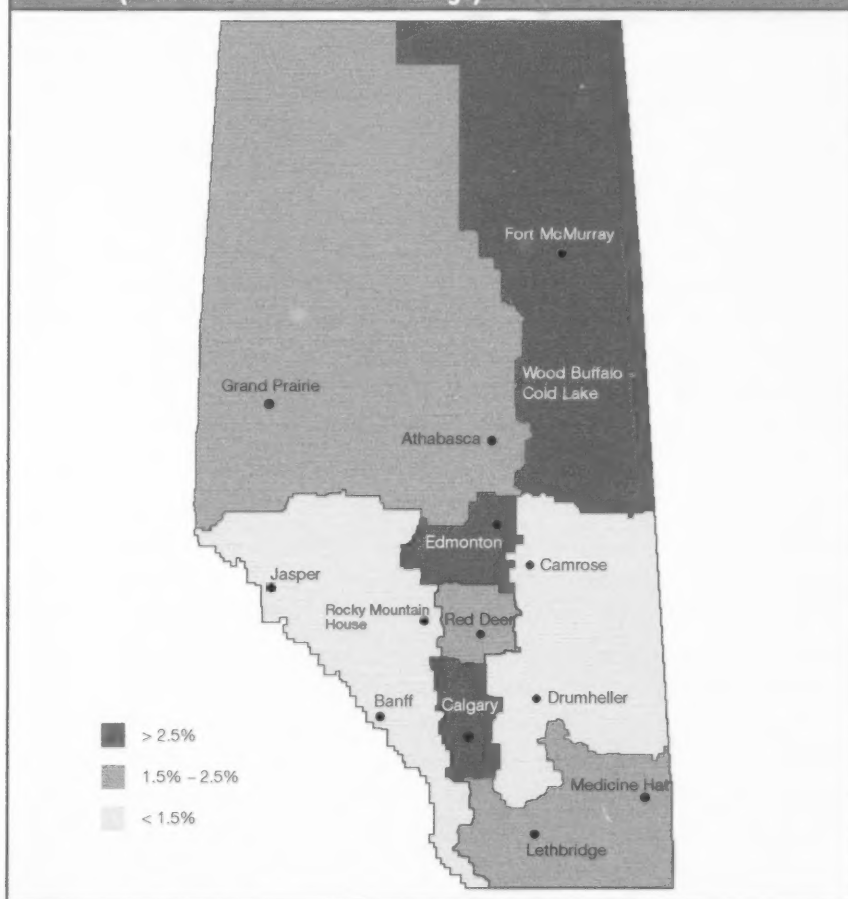
The Calgary and Edmonton economic regions both grew at an annual rate of 2.8% over the last ten years. These two regions are responsible for 77.0% of the province's job gains in the

last decade due to their high growth and large population bases.

The Red Deer economic region grew at the third highest pace in the province over the last ten years, at an annual rate of 2.4%. This region's growth was likely aided by its close proximity to both major cities. The next fastest growing region in the last decade was Athabasca- Grand Prairie-Peace River (1.9%) which also benefited from a thriving oil and gas industry. The Lethbridge-Medicine Hat region is fifth (1.8%), the Banff-Jasper-Rocky Mountain House region ranks sixth (1.2%) and the Camrose-Drumheller region sits at seventh (1.1%).

Average employment growth over the last five years reveals a similar pattern: job creation being led by the Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake, Calgary and Edmonton economic regions.

**Chart 1: Employment Growth by Economic Region  
(2002 to 2012 annual % change)**



Source: Statistics Canada

## Unemployment rates similar across Alberta

Alberta has maintained the lowest unemployment rate in Canada for much of the last decade. This rate is fairly consistent across regions in Alberta with the exception of the Camrose -Drumheller region which has the lowest ten year average unemployment rate at 3.8%. The other seven regions' average unemployment rates range between 4.4% and 5.1%. Two of the highest average unemployment rates are Edmonton (5.0%) and Calgary (4.9%), which may partly reflect the movement of job searchers into higher growth urban areas.

## Conclusion

All regions in Alberta have contributed to the province's impressive labour market performance over the last ten years. The two major urban economic regions and the Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake economic region have led all regions in job growth over this period.

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